CC-2 - GHG Reduction Target

Utah recently joined the Western Climate Initiative, which commits its member states to develop a regional GHG reduction target.

Benefit/cost of Reducing CO_2e:

N/A

Assessment: High Priority. Bin B. 15 out of 22 votes.

Utah has committed to provide a State recommendation for GHG reduction by May, 2008. In developing the target, it is recommended that an economic assessment be done that includes costs and benefits.

A GHG reduction target is essential for implementing and monitoring the range of options discussed across all sectors. A voluntary target may be agreed to rather easily, while a mandatory target will require significant effort. Mandatory targets will result in enforceable emission reductions. Governor Huntsman should take the lead in establishing short-term and long-term goals. Short term goals spur immediate action and should be aggressive, but achievable, based on existing technologies. Long-term goals should be based on scientific projections of the emission reductions necessary to stabilize the climate to a two degree centigrade change.

When assessing and developing GHG reduction targets, it will be important to distinguish between energy production and consumption, commonly referred to as "Load-Based" and "Source-Based". For example, California policy of energy imports affects the GHG emissions of sources in other states. Montana has passed legislation with a similar proposal but is a net exporter of energy. Wyoming, Utah, and New Mexico are net exporters of energy.

Many U.S. states and countries have decided that stabilizing the climate at no more than a two degree centigrade increase requires GHG emission cuts of 60-80 percent from 1990 levels. The following Western states have adopted GHG emissions reduction goals, to date:[3]

Arizona:	2000 levels by 2020; 50 percent below 2000 levels by 2040
California:	2000 levels by 2010; 1990 levels by 2020; 80 percent below 1990 levels by 2050[4]
Oregon:	1990 levels by 2010; 10 percent below by 2020; 75 percent by 2050[5]
New Mexico:	2000 levels by 2012; 10 percent below by 2020; 75 percent below 2050
Washington:	1990 levels by 2020; 70-80 percent below 1990 levels by 2050 [6]

[3] Arizona Climate Change Advisory Group, "Climate Change Action Plan," http://www.azclimatechange.us/ewebeditpro/items/O40F9347.pdf., at 7

[4] California's climate reduction targets are found in state law AB 32. The 2050 Goal is provided for by Executive Order.

[5] Oregon's targets enacted in 2004 were in HB 3543.

Colorado is considering setting separate targets for state emissions, creating a separate body to oversee climate policy, and requiring local governments to develop GHG reduction plans and targets.
Montana is considering statewide GHG reduction targets and separate target for state emissions.

At least 7 other states have set GHG targets; they typically call for a 10 percent cut from 1990 levels by 2020 and a 60-80 percent reduction by 2050. The European Union has adopted a 20 percent reduction goal by 2020 (30 percent reduction if China and other large emitters accept a similar goal), and some European nations have set 50-80 percent reduction goals by 2050.[7]

[6] Washington's targets can be found in SB 6004. Under the Northeast's Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI), governors of seven states have committed to stabilizing emissions at current levels from 2009-15 and then reducing them by 10 percent by 2019. http://www.rggi.org/.

[7] Europa Press Release, Jan 10, 2007, "Questions and Answers on the Commission Communication Limiting Global Climate Change to 2°C, http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=MEMO/07/17&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en; http://www.theclimategroup.org/index.php?pid=422; http://thewatt.com/article1270.html.